

# South Dakota Reading Content Standards

## INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

### PREFACE

All South Dakotans are eager to ensure that graduates of South Dakota's public schools have the knowledge, skills, and competencies essential to leading productive, fulfilling, and successful lives as they continue their education, enter the workforce, and assume their civic responsibilities.

In 1997, the South Dakota State Legislature passed SB170 that amended South Dakota Codified Law 13-3-48 to address the issue of challenging state content standards. The adopted amendment reads as follows: "The secretary of the Department of Education and Cultural Affairs shall prepare and submit for approval of the South Dakota Board of Education academic content standards in language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science for grades one through twelve. Each school district shall adopt and implement clearly defined and measurable course guidelines so as to meet the state academic content standards."

With input from students, parents, teachers, and communities of South Dakota, the Standards Committee was charged with revision of the current South Dakota Content Standards and Performance Descriptors. The final document evolved from recent research in best practices in the teaching of reading, such as the balanced literacy approach and the **No Child Left Behind** legislation, experience in classrooms with the existing South Dakota Content Standards, the evolution of published standards from other states, numerous professional publications, and lengthy discussions by experienced K-16 South Dakota teachers.

In these standards, the content that students need to acquire at each grade level, K-12, is stated explicitly. With student mastery of this content, South Dakota schools will be on a par with those in the best educational systems in other states and nations. The standards are comprehensive and specific, they are rigorous, and they represent our commitment to excellence. The standards are firm but not unyielding; they will be modified in future years to reflect new research and scholarship.

### THE PURPOSE OF THE SOUTH DAKOTA STANDARDS DOCUMENT

The South Dakota standards provide a listing of essential, core content to be taught and learned, and are designed to guide the planning of instruction and to anchor the assessment of learning from kindergarten through twelfth grade, while the performance descriptors are meant to provide information to teachers and students at particular levels, giving them specific targets for instruction and learning. The document presents a starting point for formed dialogue among those dedicated and committed to quality education in South Dakota. By providing a common set of goals and expectations for all students in all schools, this education dialogue will be strengthened and enhanced.

## FORMAT OF THE STANDARDS DOCUMENT

### Standards

The standards are the targets that all students need to meet at the proficient level by the end of each grade level. They are organized by grade so that a student, parent, classroom teacher, administrator, or local school board member can quickly review what learning is expected at each specific grade. The Bloom's Taxonomy level of cognitive challenge is listed in the standards document to make clear the level at which each standard should be assessed. At grades 9-12, some schools teach certain skills at different grades than those listed in these standards, for example, speech. However, all standards in each grade level need to be met at the proficient level by the time students are tested on the state level.

The standards are also provided in a second format across grade levels so that the alignment of standards from grade to grade is immediately apparent. This document contains content goals, indicators, grade level standards, and performance descriptors. Each has a role in shaping the expected outcomes for South Dakota students.

- **Goals and indicators** represent expected outcomes for students graduating from South Dakota schools.
- **Grade level content standards** represent expected outcomes for students completing each grade level.
- **Supporting skills** represent enabling and pre-requisite skills that students may need to be taught in order to achieve the standards.
- **Examples** represent some possible materials, activities, or subskills that classroom instructors could use in teaching the standards.

### Performance Descriptors

The performance descriptors are organized into proficiency levels. These proficiency levels describe how a student at that level would be expected to perform the grade level standards. To identify increasing proficiency in reading, the levels are labeled as follows:

- **Advanced:** A student performing at the advanced level exceeds expectations for that grade level. The student is able to perform the content standards for the grade at a high level of difficulty, complexity, or fluency.
- **Proficient:** A student performing at the proficient level meets expectations for that grade level. The student is able to perform the content standards for the grade at the level of difficulty, complexity, or fluency specified by the standards.
- **Basic:** A student performing at the basic level performs below expectations for that grade level. The student is able to perform some of the content standards for the grade below the level of difficulty, complexity, or fluency specified by the grade level standards.

A student performing below the basic level is unable to perform the content standards for the grade. Therefore, no description is provided for this performance level.

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTORS

The reading content standards for South Dakota students who are English language learners (ELL) are the same as those specified for all students. However, these students must overcome the additional barrier of learning in a language other than their first language. For this reason, performance descriptors are included in this document to demonstrate levels of English language proficiency that reflect the progress of these students toward mastering English as they acquire academic achievement proficiency.

Cut scores on the English language proficiency test are set and reported, based on the performance descriptors, to reflect student progress. The curriculum of the English language learning program is aligned with these performance descriptors. By aligning the curriculum goals and objectives of the program to the performance descriptors, teachers are able to track the progress of students through the program and determine their readiness to achieve the content standards intended to be met by all South Dakota students.

The performance descriptors are organized into proficiency levels. These proficiency levels describe how an ELL student performs in English and reflect increasing acquisition of English language skills. To identify increasing proficiency in English language acquisition in reading, the levels for English language learners contained in this document are labeled as follows:

- **Proficient:** An ELL student performing at the proficient level reads, writes, speaks, and listens in English with language proficiency adequate to meet expectations for the student's grade level.
- **Intermediate:** An ELL student performing at the intermediate level reads, writes, speaks, and listens in English with language proficiency adequate to meet some expectations for the student's grade level, but is not yet fluent enough to sufficiently meet grade-level expectations.
- **Basic:** An ELL student performing at the basic level is starting to read, write, speak, and listen in English, but is not fluent enough to function in English without assistance.
- **Emergent:** An ELL student performing at the emergent level has very little ability to read, write, speak, and listen to English. The student has a few isolated words.
- **Pre-emergent:** An ELL student performing at the pre-emergent level does not understand enough language to read, write, speak, or listen in English.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

This document uses appropriate English language arts terminology, so a reader may occasionally encounter an unfamiliar term. In order to assist the reader with terminology

used in this document, a **glossary** has been written with specific definitions to clarify intended meaning.

A resource list is provided in the appendix as a sampling of possible information sources for teachers to use. Because new resources are constantly becoming available, this list is in no way intended to be an exhaustive or specified list of the resources teachers will use. The reader is also cautioned that electronic media sites often change addresses. Use of a search engine is sometimes required to locate the resources when addresses change.

## **A MESSAGE TO TEACHERS WHO WILL USE THE DOCUMENT**

The content standards revision committee was made up of a group of K-16 teachers who pooled their thoughts and experiences to provide a starting place for reaching our goal: each student mastering each standard to at least the proficient level.

A set of standards is simply a place to begin—they lay the foundation for measurable, consistent, high-level student learning; however, teachers must consider their individual students and select the methods that will work best for their classrooms. It is our hope that these ideas will help our fellow teachers create interesting and challenging lessons. We trust our colleagues and do not wish this document to appear proscriptive.

Clearly, there is more to teaching and learning than these standards. Adjustments will need to be made for those students who exceed the standards, and for those who cannot easily meet them. Use these standards as a starting point to create an environment where students can learn to live and thrive in a constantly changing, increasingly complex world.

**IMPORTANT NOTE TO TEACHERS: Not every supporting skill presented in this document needs to be taught in order for students to master that standard. This is also true for the examples listed in this document. Supporting skills and examples are provided only to illustrate the standard, and are not designed as requirements to be taught.**

## **A MESSAGE TO PARENTS**

Parental support of a child's learning is absolutely critical, not only academically, but especially emotionally. Parents' and teachers' words or actions affect a child emotionally and either hinder or support the development of that child's mind.

Provide your student a safe, supportive learning environment, set reasonable expectations, and praise achievements. Read and write to and with your student; wonder about and question the text; celebrate and enjoy literacy together.

Recognize that this document is designed as a foundation guide for schools in the planning of Language Arts curriculum from kindergarten through twelfth grade. A close look demonstrates that, at every grade level, students apply similar language skills and concepts

as they use increasingly more complex materials to build upon and refine their knowledge, gaining sophistication and independence as they grow. As does any profession, the instruction of Language Arts requires the use of terminology specific to this craft. Rather than add cumbersome definitions to the text, an extensive glossary is included to clarify terminology as needed.

## **CONCLUSION - A VISION FOR READING IN SOUTH DAKOTA**

The South Dakota Reading Standards address the skills that are fundamental to all other learning. Today's rapidly changing world demands that students possess the reading skills to become discriminating consumers, effective users of information, and lifelong learners. They must be able to read not only for practical, work-related understanding, but also to better understand history and culture, and to prepare themselves intellectually for the demands of the future. The ultimate purpose of these standards is to ensure that all students have the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in the technological, globally competitive world of the twenty-first century.